

# **Fate of women sent-down youths during the Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement**

## **Abstract:**

This paper focus on the marriage and married life of sent-down youths from Shanghai to Jilin Province during the Down to the Countryside Movement. The main historical materials are the oral interviews conducted by the author. My analysis also incorporates regional records, memories and diaries.

**Key words:** Yanbian      Sent-down youth      Marriage      Married life

## Chapter 1

In April 2017, there was a conference about Sent-down youth issue in Shanghai. I went to the conference with my professor Jin Guangyao, who was a sent-down youth himself and has researched in sent-down youth as a scholar for decades. He was the guest of the conference and made some of his research results public.

I want to talk more about him because he is the trigger of my interest in sent-down youth issue. Jin Guangyao, who was born in 1954, was a middle school student when the Down to the Countryside Movement started. he spent ten years in the countryside of Anhui Province, which is a developing province in the middle of China. The eastern part of China is more developed because of more convenient traffic and more interaction with overseas. Comparing with that, the middle and western part was isolated and undeveloped. Jin was kind of a lucky person compared with most sent-down youths. I said that because during the Down to the Countryside Movement, the college entrance examination was eliminated. The only way for students to go to college was eliminated between 1966-1976, and restarted in 1977. Jin took part in the examination in 1977, applied and got admitted by Anhui Industry College, which was a good university but he was not satisfied. His dream before he went to the countryside was to go to Peking or Fudan university, which are the top universities in China. He

didn't apply for Fudan University in 1977 because he was worried that so many students took part in the examination that year and the competition was too hot. The exact number of students who took part in the examination was 5,700,000, and 270,000 was admitted by colleges. The admittance rate was 4.8%. I attached a sheet to demonstrate the admittance rate from 1977 to 2005. The chart showed that it is really hard to get admitted by universities, harder to be admitted by prestigious universities from 1977 to 1979. Although Jin was admitted by Fudan University in 1978, he is really special and lucky. After he was admitted in Fudan University, his major was history. He became a scholar and devoted all his life into sent-down youths and Modern Chinese History study. He tried for ten years to apply for a fund to collect local historical materials about sent-down youth and finally got admitted by Chinese government. Down to the countryside Movement is complicated because government was blamed for sending young people to the countryside and didn't allow research about this issue at first. Study about this issue was so hard but better than before. I admire Jin's spirit and determination.

At the sent-down youth conference many old sent-down youths came and had ceremonies in memory of their life in the countryside. But during the conference, some people handed out brochures to elicit emotions and fight for rights for those sent-down youths who still live in the countryside and have no chance to back to cities. The sent-

down youths who attended the conference were those who went back to cities after the movement. When I talked with them, I found that they don't care so much about the destiny of those sent-down youths who are still in the countryside. I was trying to find someone to interview in the conference. But when I asked those people have you thought about that what life would be like if you still stayed in the countryside, they ignored me, or said, I came back, I don't care, could you stop asking such questions?

At that moment, I realized that although sent-down youths were sent down to the countryside at the same time, they had different destinies. Seventy percent of them came back. But there are people still in the countryside. They were sent there by the government but nearly forgotten by people in cities. I don't want them to be forgotten. Their lives have been changed totally because of government policy. They were deprived of the opportunities to continue to be educated. They deserve to be remembered, not only because they sacrificed for the country, but also to remind the whole country that someone suffered because of a wrong policy. People should pay attention to that to avoid having such bad things happen again.

When I said that my research interest is sent-down youth issue, many people asked me: why are you interested in something that so far away from you? This chapter is my answer. Things that happened fifty years ago can easily be forgotten, but I will help

them to be recorded and remembered because I believe that those sent-down youths who sacrificed for the country deserves to be remembered. I care about this part not only because it relates to my previous generations but also because I hope Chinese people and the government could remember the history and won't let similar things happen again.

<b>1977</b>	570	27	4.7%
<b>1978</b>	610	40.2	6.6%
<b>1979</b>	468	28	6.0%
<b>1980</b>	333	28	8.4%
<b>1981</b>	259	28	10.8%
<b>1982</b>	187	32	17.1%
<b>1983</b>	167	39	23.4%
<b>1984</b>	164	48	29.3%
<b>1985</b>	176	62	35.2%
<b>1986</b>	191	57	29.8%
<b>1987</b>	228	62	27.2%

## Chapter 2

In this chapter, I'll give a history background of Down to the Countryside Movement.

The Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement was a policy instituted in China by Mao Zedong in 1968. Chairman Mao declared that each family should send at least one urban youth to army reclamation farm or villages to learn from the workers and farmers. Those youths who were sent down to the countryside were called “sent-down youths” or “educated youths”. Approximately 17 million youths were sent to rural areas as a result of the whole movement since 1950. When we talk about The Great Cultural Revolution or Down to the Countryside Movement, we mainly suppose the movement from 1968 to 1978. However, The Great Cultural Revolution or Down to the countryside Movement didn't happen suddenly in 1968. Since 1950, in several provinces, several batches of young people were sent to the countryside. But during 1950 to 1966, Down to the Countryside Movement gradually developed into a national movement. From 1966 to 1968, middle and high school students around the country were sent down to the countryside and Down to the Countryside Movement was issued as a policy officially. Why did Mao announce this policy? There are several research results from historians. First, Mao did that to release the burden of cities, includes high unemployment rate and shortage of food supply in big cities. In the ideology of the Communist Party of China, unemployment

is a peculiar phenomenon of capitalist society. Socialist society distributes jobs to everyone so it shouldn't have the problem of unemployment. However, after the Great Leap Forward, the industry and agriculture in mainland China stagnated completely, and the total grain output was gradually insufficient to meet the needs of the growing urban population in China. The Great Leap Forward is a movement during the Great Cultural Revolution. The government encouraged people to produce as much as grains possible and propaganda those peasants who reports that they grow the most food, even though some of the results were fake. The movement ignored the economic rules and led to the three-year famine in during 1958-1961. The government could not arrange the work of urban youth in the fields of industry and services. If those young people could go to the countryside and produce food with local farmers, cities would not need so much food supply and job positions. The social contradictions could be released.

But the food shortage and high unemployment rate are not the most important reasons. The Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement is part of the Chinese Cultural Revolution initiated by Mao Zedong. The main purpose of the movement is political struggle. In addition to Mao, there was another famous Chinese leader called Liu Shaoqi. Mao trusted Liu at first and treated him as successor. However, they had differences about one fundamental problem. The problem is whether class struggle or economic construction is the main objective after the

People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. The problem was not obvious at first, but in the 1960s, when the country recovered for one decade and polarization between the rich and the poor came out, Mao thought that eliminating the polarization was the most important issue but Liu was more pragmatic. Liu thought that it was not the right time to use political means to influence the economic development. From Mao's perspective, he didn't trust Liu anymore because he thought Liu was not standing by Socialist society. Mao launched the Great Cultural Revolution to eliminate the so-called "bourgeois power" led by Liu Shaoqi has been achieved. But why did young students get involved in this political struggle and become victims? I need to start by introducing the Red Guards Movement.

If you are familiar with modern Chinese history, you must have heard about the Great May 4 Patriotic Movement in 1919. It is tradition for Chinese students to participate in politics. After the People's Republic of China was founded, Mao had really high expectations for middle, high school and college students. The Red Guards movement is also part of the Great Cultural Revolution, and it is before the Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement. Students are the Red Guards and they support Mao faithfully. They helped Mao get rid of those people who have different political opinions and threatened socialism. However, these students were too young and not rational enough. They created several violence incidents. out of Mao's control. The Red Guards had gradually become troublesome and Mao lost faith in them. The



huge number of unemployed youth, who were highly enthusiastic about politics posed a serious threat to political stability. In addition to economic considerations, the decision to send youth to the countryside was mainly a political strategy to divide and govern urban youth by sending them to rural areas for agricultural labor.

There are also some other considerations. Mao wanted to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas. As we all know, the Communist Party is supported by farmers and workers. Intellectuals were called Revisionists and had low social status at that time. Mao still had expectations for those students. He hoped that by sending those students to factories and to the countryside, they could learn from farmers and workers and become the generation that could develop socialism.

For those sent-down youths, the movement changed their lives. The sent-down youth were middle school and high school students when they were sent down to the countryside. The movement started in 1968 and ended at 1978. These youths spent their ten golden years in the countryside and lost the opportunities to pursue higher education and attend universities. And they faced a lot of other problems. The fate of their second generation was also changed by the movement. In 1976, the Chinese Communist Party started to encourage young women sent-down youths to marry local farmers and to make roots in the countryside. Many young women chose to do so because they thought they were improving their social status. At that time, Chinese people were divided into “Five Black categories” and “Five Red categories.” “Five

Black categories” included landlords, rich peasants, counter revolutionaries, bad elements and rightists. Comparing with that, there were “Five Red Categories,” including workers, poor middle and lower peasants, military personnel, cadres, and martyrs. Those young students who are the second generation of “Five Black categories” don’t have faith in themselves or their families because the government criticized their parents and the Red Guards bullied them or were even violent to them. Some of those women sent-down youths thought they would never have chances to go back to cities. However, after Mao passed away, Deng Xiaoping issued the policy that sent-down youths who were single could go back to cities in 1978. But those who were married with farmers stayed in the countryside for the rest of their lives. After the policy that sent-down youths could go back to cities if they were single was issued, many social problems happened. Some sent-down youths got divorced with their local wife or husband for the chance to go back to cities, and some sent-down youths who worked in big farm were forbidden to go back to cities since they had found their job in the local area. Big protests happened and lots of people died or were injured during this time. It is a special period of Chinese contemporary history.

### Chapter 3

In this chapter, I'll give a brief historiography of the research about the movement, especially women's choices and fates in the movement. After that, I want to illustrate the importance of oral interview and materials in research of this historical event.

1980 marks the initial stage of research on the history of sent-down youth in China. The earliest review and reflection on the history of sent-down youth was carried out in a literary way. The memoirs, reportage and documentary novels in the literary works of the sent-down youth take the author's own experiences as clues, which provide rich and valuable primitive folk historical materials for the study of history. The relevant research is included in *The Collected Works of Chinese Sent-down youth on Mountains and Rural Areas*, edited by Jin Lu and Jin Guangyao. Examples of essays in this volume include: "Unbelievable and Unwilling to Believe - About the Creation of Three Root-seeking Writers" and "The Impact of Rural Culture on the Group of Sent-down youth Writers". Those essays were mostly descriptive, by introducing works of sent-down youth writers, researchers start to explore the history through literary way. Historical research was kind of unaccepted at that time since the movement just passed and was kind of political sensitive.

The real academic research on this history began in the 1990s. During this period, a number of books on the history of sent-down youth detached from their memoirs were published. Liu Xiaomeng and Ding Yizhuang are the masters of this topic. Their works "History of Chinese Sent-down youth: Chulan (1953-1968)" and "History of Chinese Sent-down youth: Tide (1966-1980)" have made a detailed exposition and theoretical exploration of the whole historical process of Chinese intellectuals going to the mountains and the countryside, with abundant and accurate information. In addition to newspapers, archives, local chronicles, existing research works and memoirs, the historical materials adopted in the research are supplemented by oral interviews with cadres, sent-down youth and even their children who participated in policy-making at that time. Combing out a large number of historical data and historical data and facts with great academic significance. Another edited by the sent-down youth scholar Liu Xiaomeng and Dingyizhuang is a comprehensive reference book on the history of the sent-down youth's movement to the mountains and countryside. It systematically expounds the main concepts, events, meetings and policies of the movement, which has the dual characteristics of dictionary and memorabilia. During this period, there were many dimensions in the study of the history of sent-down youth, such as the reasons for sent-down youth going to the mountains and countryside, historical stages, evaluation, return to the city, reasons for termination, and even some micro-thematic studies, such as the marriage analysis of sent-down youth in the countryside. Relevant research

anthologies are included in the Collection of Research on Chinese Sent-down youth Going to Mountains and Rural Areas compiled by Jin Lun and Jin Guangyao. The meaning of this book is great because even if the up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement is nationwide, different provinces have different situations. And the three main ways are going to the countryside, which was called construction team at that time; going to the national farm or the corps. They are quite different. But this series of books collect materials, especially official records from all these situations. What's more, it also includes records about the reason, the effect, the process, almost every angle of the movement.

The oral history of Chinese sent-down youth written by Liu Xiaomeng, a scholar of sent-down youth in the 2000's, is noteworthy. Liu Xiaomeng analyzes three years' interviews with dozens of old sent-down youth and divides the sent-down youth into three types: typical sent-down youth, folk leaders among sent-down youth and ordinary sent-down youth. The application of oral history to the study of sent-down youth not only broadens the scope of historical materials, but also broadens the voice from the folk, which makes the study of sent-down youth go a step further in the direction of "personal narrative". Research on this period also includes the collection of historical materials of *the sent-down youth of the Shangshan-Rural Movement*, edited by Jin Guangyao of Fudan University and Jin Lu, a researcher from the Shanghai Academy of

Social Sciences. Nearly one hundred sent-down youths and student volunteers worked four years for the collection of the materials of the series of books. A collection of more than 6,000 local chronicles of young intellectuals going to the mountains and countryside in China was published in six volumes of *the sent-down youth of the Shangshan-Rural Movement*.

In addition, the achievements of overseas sent-down youth are also worthy of attention. French scholar Pan Mingxiao's *Lost Generation: China's Uphill and Rural Movement* is the latest research monograph on sent-down youth published overseas in recent years. In addition, Deng Peng, a professor at North Carolina State University, published a memoir collection of one million words in 2006, "Silent Community: Memoirs of Old Sent-down youth in Daba Mountain" (1964-1965), which reviews the unforgettable experiences of Chongqing Old Sent-down youth in the Daba Mountains. In 2008, "Silent Communities: Memoirs of Rural Sent-down youth before the Cultural Revolution", Volume 1 (continued), and "Silent Communities: Memoirs of Rural Sent-down youth before the Cultural Revolution", and Volume 2 (continued). Continuing to write a real record enriches the Memoirs of the sent-down youth.

Scholars in the recent past have made some significant achievements in the study of sent-down youth marriage. One example is *the research Anthology of Chinese sent-*

*down youth going to the mountains and countryside*, edited by Jin Guangyao and Kim Kong. Liu Xiaomeng, a scholar of sent-down youth, wrote *An Analysis of Marriage of Sent-down youth in Rural Areas* that discussed the overall marital status of sent-down youth from five perspectives: marriage policy, marriage rate, marriage type, predicament of married sent-down youth and unmarried phenomenon of old age. To study the marriage of sent-down youth as a micro-topic is a masterpiece of the study on the marriage of sent-down youth. Li Qiaoning, a scholar who is also included in this collection, studies the causes and evaluation of the marriage between female sent-down youth and peasants from a smaller angle, which advances the study of the marriage of sent-down youth. Other related studies are scattered among academic works. For example, Liu Xiaomeng's "History of Chinese Sent-down youth: The Great Tide (1966-1980)" has a special chapter on the marriage of intellectuals. Pan Mingxiao's *Lost generation: China's movement to and from the countryside* also has some implications. There are also many related materials in oral and memoirs, such as *Youth Equation - Self-Description of Fifty Beijing Educational Girls*", which involves more oral narratives of marriage. In addition, the research achievements of the Forces Nouvelles deserve our attention. Song Ruixuan's master's thesis *"Anti-tide Heroes: A Female Sent-down youth Typical in National Discourse and Personal Memory"* of Fudan University reveals the female sent-down youth advocated by the policy at that time through the investigation of Bai Qixian, a sent-down youth typical in official propaganda reports

and personal memories. The combination of peasants and sent-down youth is a support for the policy that taking root in the countryside.sent-down youth.

Within the research work on the representatives of female sent-down youths, there are multiple writings about Bai Qixian, a woman who graduated from Hebei University and went to the Cangxian Yan village in Hebei Province to participate in labor. In 1971, she married Bi Zhenyun, a peasant in the Xiang Guozhuang production brigade. These days, she is well-known as a representative of a young female sent-down youth who “took root” in the countryside, which means she decided to stay in the countryside permanently. Liu Xiaomeng has mentioned the importance of Bai Qixian in her book *"Analysis of Marriages of Young Sent-down youths in the Countryside."*(Liu, 1998) In early 1974, Bai Qixian was established as a typical symbol of this phenomenon; the central policy gradually changed from promoting late marriage to the promotion of young female sent-down youth marrying peasants and becoming rooted in rural areas. However, there is no research about the reasons why the policy changed and why the female sent-down youth resist and disregard the policy. In addition, the contradictions between the family, the individual and the nation have not yet been deeply analyzed.

Through sorting out the previous writings and summarizing the research status of the former, I find that scholars have conducted rich research on the marriage policy of the



sent-down youth, marriage rate, marriage type, predicament of the married sent-down youth and the phenomenon of entering old age unmarried, involving a wide range of research materials and research methods with their own characteristics and novelty. However, there are still many gaps and shortcomings in the study of the sent-down youth marriage in the individual memory, including the individual's response to the state policy and ideas. First, the research fails to make full use of all kinds of information. As for the use of raw materials, scholars mostly use archives, documents and other official research. The use of personal diaries, memoirs and oral historical materials is inadequate. Second, the research ideas of various scholars are roughly the same. On the issue of sent-down youth's marriage, it is common to talk about the typical sent-down youth propagated by the state, or the government's marriage policy, such as late marriage, late childbearing, family planning and so on. But the actual response of the ordinary sent-down youth to the policy and individual ideas is overlooked by macro-observation, including lack of emphasis on individual memory, especially ordinary sent-down youth. That's why I use oral history as my main method to study sent-down youth, not complimentary but main method. Oral history valued because it makes history complete, helps things remembered. The most important is, teaching the young generation don't make the same mistake as their older generation did.

I interviewed seven sent-down youths, to deepen the understanding of their marriage status from the perspective of ordinary sent-down youth, and reassess the sent-down youths' marriages under their specific historical conditions. The seven interviewees selected are Li Guibao, Zhang Xuezheng, Qin Guofeng, Pan Longde, Liu Xiudi, Tang Haifang and Cheng Yufang. Their basic background information is listed as follows:

Name	Gender	Year to the countryside	Marriage Age	Marriage Year	Background of their partner	Year back to cities
Li Guibao	Female	1969	23	1972	Local Farmer	1993
Zhang Xuezheng	Female	1969	25	1976	Sent-down youth	2000
Qin Guofeng	Male	1969	30	1976	Local Worker	1997
Liu Xiudi	Female	1969	20	1971	Local Farmer	No
Tang Haifang	Female	1967	20	1969	Local Farmer	No
Cheng Yufang	Female	1969	24	1973	Local Farmer	No
Pan Longdi	Female	1969	26	1976	Local Farmer	No

When choosing these seven interviewees, I paid attention to their common geographical characteristics. They are all sent-down youth from Shanghai to Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, Jilin Province, and they all enter the rural production teams to participate in labor. But there are also some differences in their specific geographical locations. For example, Pan Longdi's interview is the only Shanghai sent-down youth in her production team, which is quite remote from the center of the

countryside and the traffic is not convenient so people there are not very well-informed. This does have a certain effect on her subsequent marriage and life choice.

I chose Shanghai sent-down youth in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture as my subject because more than half of the local people are Korean and speak Korean. The gap between the sent-down youth and the local people is not only the barrier between urban and rural areas. There is also an ethnic and language barrier. Therefore, the study of the marriage and family life of the sent-down youth in this area has its particularity. In addition, as introduced before, in terms of time, the interviewees were all the sent-down youth who were sent down to the countryside in 1967-1969.

Considering that the earliest sent-down youth who went to the countryside usually reached the age of marriage at the earliest time, and also faced the problem of marriage choice at the earliest time, it would be more efficient to choose the sent-down youth who were sent down between 1967 and 1969 to interview.

At the same time, I also consider whether they went back to cities or not at last. I include three sent-down youth who have returned to the city and four who stayed in the Korean Autonomous Prefecture for the rest of their lives as my interviewees.

Considering family background and economic situation, among the two sent-down youth who are currently staying in Yanbian, Pan Longdai, an sent-down youth with relatively better living conditions and Liu Xiudi, an sent-down youth who is still living in villages with poor living conditions.

In terms of gender, my interviewees are mainly female, but I also interview a male sent-down youth, focusing on the different gender perspectives on the marriage and life choice of the whole sent-down youth group.

Finally, I also take the diversification of marriage forms into consideration. Among my interviewees, there are Shanghai educated young women married to Korean local farmers, Shanghai educated young men married to Korean local women, Shanghai educated young men married to Korean local women, and Shanghai educated young men married to female sent-down youth.

## Chapter 4

This chapter analyzes the specific marital and family situation of seven interviewees. Six of my interviewees are female and questions I asked mainly centered on marriage and family. I'll interpret my interview from the following perspectives. First, I look at the reasons why the seven sent-down youth made their marriage choices at that time. Second, I examine to what extent the marriage policy advocated by the central government affected the marriage choices of the sent-down youth. Third, I explore the differences in their married life after making different marriage choices. Four, what are the reasons for their choices about returning to Shanghai? Among the seven interviewees, five married local farmers and four of them (Li Guibao, Cheng Yufang, Tang Haifang and Liu Xiudi) insisted on marrying local farmers under the objection of their Shanghai families. What did the four women sent-down youths think about the marriage policy advocated by the central government?

Tang Haifang married a local farmer in 1969. When she got married with the local farmer, she had no idea that she could go back to a city. "At that time, I thought that I won't have chance to go back to Shanghai and would stay in the countryside for the rest of my life. Since I had to take root in the countryside, I had to plan for myself and find a young man who was diligent, good at farming and is able to support family."

(10.18.2018, Xia's interview with Tang, phone interview, session 1) When she got married, she was only twenty years old. Her family objected her marriage because they thought that a city girl married a peasant sounds disgraceful. And she admitted that she regretted her marriage after knowing that she could return to Shanghai if she were single.. I asked her whether she has thought about divorce. She said that she was pregnant with the local farmer's child later so she did not consider divorce. I could feel her negative attitude about marriage and life. At the end of the interview, she said, "you could say that I have accepted my fate or give away to my fate."

Cheng Yufang married a local farmer in 1973. She said that in 1973 she already knew that she could return to the city if she did not marry. "How did you know that?" I asked. "Because people around me were always discussing this issue and I don't know from where they heard about the news." She answered. This also proves that the sent-down youth really do care about whether they can return to cities or not and off course, they want to return to cities. Similar to Tang Haifang's family, Cheng's family also objects her marriage with the local farmer because they know that if Cheng didn't get married, she could go back to Shanghai a few years later. But Cheng ignored her family's opinion because she wasn't close to her family. After her mother died, her father found her stepmother. Her stepmother was very bad to her and her three brothers. She was always beaten at home in Shanghai and didn't have a job and did not have enough food.

“At that time, I was young and naïve. I just felt that my stepmother was mean to me and my brothers. I blamed my father for marrying the step-mother. The only thing I wanted to do is to stay away from my family in Shanghai.”

“Where are your brothers now? Are you close to them?” I asked her.

“I am close to them, but my brothers are far away from me. They also went to the countryside during the movement and didn’t go back to Shanghai. One of them even went to Xinjiang, the most remote place from Shanghai in China.”

“Did you and your brothers volunteer to go to the countryside or was forced by the government?”

“Mainly because we can’t stand our family.”

After deciding to take root in self-reliance, Cheng's idea is similar to that of Tang's that she should find someone who is young and good at farming to support the family. To some extent, Cheng's story and choice is a little extreme, because of her special family background, which can be interpreted from the perspective of rebellious feelings of girls in their twenties. In addition, it seems that heavy farming load is an important reason why women sent-down youths marry local farmers.

Li Guibao married a local peasant in 1972. Like Cheng, she knew that she might be

able to return to the city if she didn't get married. Her brother was a teacher in Shanghai and was well-informed. Li's family situation is better than Cheng. She is the youngest child in the family. Her brothers and sisters didn't go to the countryside because when the movement started, she was the only child in her family who is still single. If she returned to the city, she could take over her mother's work after her mother retired. At that time, having a job in a public institution as Li's mother was not easy. "If you marry a local farmer, you will lose such a good opportunity," she said. When her brother heard that she was in love with a local peasant, he was angry and confused. He wrote a letter immediately to Changchun Rural Office to ask whether his sister was induced or forced to marry a peasant. If someone threatened or forced his sister, his family would strongly disagree. At that time, the central government was issuing documents to strengthen the management of sent-down youths. The central government wanted to severely punish the local people for bullying the sent-down youths, mainly in response to the rape of female sent-down youth by the political directors in some rural areas, reported by newspapers and astonished central governors. The young man who fell in love with Li became the focus of supervision and criticism. The young man that Li really liked had good talent in musical instrument. On the other hand, the young man's family condition was bad. He was the eldest child in his family, his mother was ill, his father died and his brother was young, and there were also three sisters in the family. He was the only labor force in his family. Li was full of sympathy for the young man at that time. She



didn't say anything bad about the man when the local government criticized him. Li gave her belongings, including fashionable sports pants to his family. Li's sister told the Public Security Bureau because she believed that her sister was induced or forced. One day in 1973, the Public Security Bureau came to the village to catch the young man. Li was working in the field at that time. When she heard the news, she immediately dropped her hoe and ran to stop the police car. She said that the young man did not force her to do anything and they were going to get married. No one stipulated that Shanghai sent-down youth and local farmers could not get married. At that time, the cadres made it clear that if they got married, there would be no chance for Li to be recruited as a worker and return to the city and Li's family also firmly disagreed with the marriage. However, Li insisted that her marriage had nothing to do with cadres and families. The Public Security Bureau let the young men out of the car. Li promised to get married with the peasant on July 1st in 1972.

When Liu Xiudi was married, she was only twenty years old. Her lover Liu chose to stay in the countryside on her own initiative, mainly considering that her family's economic condition was not very good. She had eight brothers and sisters and the family burden is very heavy. On the one hand, Liu Xiudi wanted to lighten the burden on her family. On the other hand, family conditions were not good enough, and they were not afraid to suffer hardships in the countryside. The family in Shanghai opposed her

marriage to a peasant, mainly considering that she was too young to marry. But she felt that her family couldn't control her and marriage was her own business. At that time, she was also ignorant. She didn't think about what kind of husband she would like to find or how she would live after marriage.

Liu Xiaomeng mentioned in the *History of Chinese Sent-down youth* that, marked by the central propaganda in 1974 that Bai Qixian married a peasant, the central marriage policy changed from late marriage and late childbearing to encouraging the combination of female sent-down youths and peasants to take root in the countryside. Tang Haifang, Cheng Yufang, Li Guibao and Liu Xiudi all married peasants in 1973 and before. Have they implemented the late marriage policy? Their marriage ages were 20, 24, 23, 20 respectively. At that time, the marriage law of 1950 was applicable to 20 men and 18 women. People's Daily praised the marriage age of the late-married sent-down youth, which was generally 27 years old and later. Relatively speaking, the marriage age of these four women sent-down youths was young. That is to say, they did not obey the policy of late marriage in the central government.

Pan Longdi married a local Korean peasant in 1976. On the one hand, Pan Longdi, like Tang Haifang, did not realize that she could return to the city in a few years without getting married. The rumor that there was a possibility of returning to the city in 1976

should have been clearer than when Tang Haifang's married in 1969, but Pan Longde was separated into a production team in a mountain at that time. The transmission of news was not very regular. She didn't have much connection with other sent-down youths who went to the countryside at the same time, and other sent-down youths did not tell her that she might be able to go back. The sent-down youth who went to the countryside at the same time with Pan Longde returned to the city in 1978. She knew that she could return to the city at that time, but she was also married at that time. On the other hand, Pan Longdi's family has four brothers and sisters, she also had very heavy family burdens. Her city family family also did not realize that she could return to the city without marrying. They felt that she could not go back anyway, so they did not oppose her marriage. She was 26 years old when she got married. She lived in the countryside for eight years before she got married. She was spiritually helpless. She was not familiar with the local people, and at the age of marriage, she wanted to find someone who could take care of her in the rest of her life. I also wonder whether marriage policy affected her marriage choice. Pan Longdi had no feelings about the "rooting in the countryside" proposed by the Central Committee, nor did she think about obeying the policy. She believed that "rooting" was just a slogan, which means that sent-down youths could choose to take root or not. Pan Longdi, who married a peasant in 1976, was not influenced by the slogan of "rooting in the countryside" advocated by the central government after 1974. Her marriage was based on her own realistic

considerations.

From the narratives of these female sent-down youths, we can see that the national will and individual wish have separated. In fact, the four sent-down youths who married the local people when the central government did not advocate "marrying the peasants to take root in the countryside" were obviously unaffected by the central policy. After the central government began vigorously propaganda in 1974, the sent-down youths did not reply to the policy. They married local people out of personal considerations, such as the pressure of life, helplessness, alienation from the feelings of the original family, or feeling that returning to the city will bring burden to the family, or simply didn't know that they can return to the city. In conclusion, the impact of policy on personal marriage choice is very limited.

Although six of the seven sent-down youths I interviewed married local peasants or urban residents - in fact, only a very small part of the whole group of sent-down youths married in the countryside. Relevant data show that the number of married sent-down youths has increased year by year since 1974. At the end of 1974, there were 480,000 married sent-down youths nationwide; in 1975, it increased to 615,000; in 1976, it was 726,000; in 1977, it reached a record of 861,000 people, accounting for 10% of the sent-down youths in rural areas at that time. However, even when the number of

married sent-down youths was the largest in 1977, the marriage rate was only 10%.

Although there are special differences among regions, in general, the number of sent-down youths married in rural areas is very small.

Although the central government has vigorously propagated the marriage policy of marrying in the countryside and set up many models, it has little effect, which also proves that more sent-down youths wanted to return to the city. This fact can also be seen from the ideological activities of those sent-down youths before marrying. Li Guibao's hesitation about marriage stems from her desire to return to the city to take over his mother's work, including the issue of "marriage affects returning to the city" that sent-down youths have been discussing all over the world, which also proves their concern about returning to the city. On the one hand, the early 1970s began to have a small scale of return to the city, let the sent-down youth see a glimmer of vitality, although in the early 1970s when the policy is not clear, the possibility of return to the city is minimal, but the sent-down youth know that if they marry local farmers, they will have no chance to return to the city at all; on the other hand, those sent-down youths have been lived in the countryside for several years. With the growth of their age, they came to have a deeper understanding of the countryside and the peasants, and even have doubts about the correctness of the whole Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement. From a personal point of view, it is realized that marrying

peasants does have many realistic problems, such as the gap with peasants' lifestyle, the low degree of spiritual fit with peasants and so on. When it comes to the choice of life events and vital interests, it becomes more prudent. Moreover, the married sent-down youths were not satisfied with their post-marital life, so that those single sent-down youths don't want to get married.

Liu Xiaomeng has discussed three types of marriage of sent-down youth in his article "Marriage Problems of Sent-down youth in Uphill and Rural Areas". They are sent-down youth and sent-down youth, sent-down youth and peasants, sent-down youth and urban workers. Although there is no national statistics on the proportion of these three types of marriages among sent-down youths, the differences among different regions are quite large. However, according to the statistics of Jilin province, the proportion of married sent-down youths and peasants in rural areas is more than 70%. According to the statistics of Jilin Province in 1980, among married sent-down youth, 74.9% married to peasants, 21% married to sent-down youths, and 4.1% married to urban workers. According to the statistics of Huaide County, Jilin Province, in 1976, 74.8% married with peasants, 17.9% married with sent-down youths and 7.3% married with workers. It can be concluded that the marriage form of married sent-down youth in Jilin province is mainly based on sent-down youth and farmers. What were the sent-down youths' considerations when they decided to marry peasants?

First of all, I'll analyze the relationship between the original family background and the marriage choice of sent-down youths. From the five interviewees, I can see that it is easier to choose to marry peasants and take root in the local area if the sent-down youth has greater economic pressure of the original family or bad relationship with their original family. Liu Xiudi explicitly mentioned that staying in Yanbian could lighten the burden of the family. Pan Longdi mentioned that there were many children in her family, and her parents didn't care so much about her. Cheng Yufang hated her father and stepmother so she wanted stay away from Shanghai. Li Guibao's situation is relatively special. Li Guibao's family in Shanghai is better than other sent-down youths who married peasants. Before she left, her mother sold her gold bracelet to get 300 yuan and prepared two large boxes of clothes and food for her. She was very reluctant to go to the countryside and felt that she might never go back. During her stay in the countryside, her mother kept sending things to her, such as fancy sports pants. Later, Li Guibao said she wanted to marry the local peasant. Even though her mother disagreed, she also sent a wedding shirt. Li Guibao's brother wrote letters to local authorities, which showed that Li Guibao's original family in Shanghai had better economic conditions and she had close relationship with her original families. Their original families could not only affect the material life of the sent-down youth, but also affect the mental state of the sent-down youth in the countryside. Women sent-down youths

married local farmers for different reasons. Tang Haifang and Cheng Yufang all want to find a capable husband who can provide material security. Pan Longdi wants to find a person who can provide spiritual support, is worthy of depending on and can take care of herself. But Li Guibao, although finally married a peasant, started with sympathy and love for the local young man.

Secondly, analyze the influence of other factors on the marriage choice of sent-down youth. Firstly, the most concerned topic of the sent-down youth is whether they can return to the city or not. Among five women sent-down youths married to peasants, Tang Haifang and Pan Longdi did not know when they were married that they might be able to return to the city. Later, they knew that they regretted it, indicating that they wanted to return to the city. Li Guibao and Liu Xiudi didn't think about how to live after marriage at all when they got married. Li Guibao didn't know what to do on the night of marriage, because her husband's family had poor economic conditions and foreign debt, and she didn't have money either. Liu Xiudi also mentioned that he was ignorant of the plan of life after marriage. The other 3 are determined to take root, so they can find a competent and caring person from a realistic perspective.

Generally speaking, although going to the countryside is a forcible national policy, sent-down youths were forced, but their marriage choices are basically unrelated to the



marriage policy advocated by the central government. From the perspective of the life experience of the sent-down youths, it can be said that apart from the typical cases of marriage propaganda, the marriage of the general public is often more related to the personal experience, especially influenced by the traditional family relations. Firstly, the living conditions of the sent-down youths in the countryside also affect their marriage choices, especially those of women. They tend to get married earlier because women can't afford to live in rural areas. Whether it is spiritual abandonment or heavy labor force in life, female sent-down youth in the production team are more likely want to get rid of difficulties through marriage than male sent-down youth. But in fact, whether the educated girls really get rid of the predicament through marriage, or whether they get into a bigger predicament because of marriage, is another question.

In addition to the female sent-down youth married to peasants, the other two cases are the local marriage of female sent-down youth and male sent-down youth, and the marriage of male sent-down youth to worker in local towns. Zhang Xuezheng and Qin Guofeng have returned to the city at last.

Zhang Xuezheng married a male sent-down youth. Comparing with the female sent-down youth who married a peasant, the most important reason why Zhang Xuezheng did not marry a peasant is that she stayed in the countryside for very short time. Zhang

Xuezhen went to the countryside as a barefoot doctor, which means not a very professional doctor, in 1969. At that time, she was only 18 years old and did not consider the problem of marriage. Because she did a good job, after only one year, she was hired by the Tumen railway authority. When the state advocated the integration of educated women and peasants to take root in the countryside in 1974, she had left the countryside for three years, so she did not feel much about the policy.

*“In 1975, I met my husband in Tumen Railway Administration. At that time, I was older and have similar hobbies with my husband, so I went to marriage in 1976.”*

Compared with five women sent-down youths, their husbands are all male farmers from the same production team. It can be found that the influence of working environment on marriage is also very important.

Qin Guofeng married a local worker. The main reason why he didn't get married until 1980 was that he wanted to make sure that there was no hope of returning to the city. Qin Guofeng went to the countryside in 1969 and entered Yanji City in 1977 through recruiting workers. He had a very strong desire to return to the city and recruit workers when he joined the queue in the countryside. He did not want to stay in the countryside all his life, so he did not want to marry a girl in the countryside. Until he was 26 years

old, he was recruited as a worker. But when the returning to cities policy came out in 1978, he already had a regular job in the local town and lost the chance to return to the city.

*“Nearly 30 years old, I felt that I had really reached the age of marriage, but I could not go back anyway. I wanted to find a trusted person to spend the rest of my life together in the local area. At that time, I hoped to find a more virtuous one.”*

Qin Guofeng has been staying in Yanbian for a long time. In fact, he has a good impression of the Korean people themselves. He feels that Korean women love cleanliness and care for their families. Qin Guofeng is a family member of the urban intelligentsia. It is also enlightened. The two families are satisfied with the introduction. Qin Guofeng's lover worked in a silk factory in Yanji City at that time, while Qin Guofeng worked in the deep mountains and had only three to four months' vacation every year, so it was not easy to fall in love.

*“When I got married in 1981, my wife was already 29 years old.”*

Qin Guofeng made it very clear that he did not want to stay in the countryside. He believed that no matter how the central government beautified the countryside at that

time, the backwardness and poor conditions of the countryside could not be ignored. Until now, the vision and education level between urban and rural areas still had a very large gap, so at that time, he was very firm. It can be said that Qin Guofeng's marriage choice, on the one hand, has its own persistence, not to stay in the countryside; on the other hand, there is a compromise on the actual conditions, he thought he had no chance to return to the city, then decided to settle down in the local. Qin Guofeng's personal thoughts and attitudes towards his marriage are based on his own understanding of the reality of rural society, so his first choice is to return to the city, followed by the goal of marriage choice in the city, even if it is to find Korean girls. On the other hand, the couple's marriage has also been approved by the families of both sides. But in the marriage choice of Li Guibao and other female sent-down youths, the autonomy of marriage choice is more manifest.

Different marriage choices directly determine what life is like after marriage. The author focuses on the following aspects when interviewing the sent-down youth's life after marriage. The most obvious thing is that the combination with the local people, whether local farmers or local urbanites, will cause great obstacles to returning to the city. Whether or not to return to the city will not only affect sent-down youth, but also affect the next generation of sent-down youth. Moreover, sent-down youth catch up with family planning after marriage, and the medical conditions in rural areas are

relatively backward. How can women and men deal with the situation of contraception, birth control and production? Finally, whether the sent-down youth have heavy financial pressures after marriage, and how well they fit in with their husbands' spiritual world are the very core aspects that affect the happiness of their married life.

Three of the seven sent-down youth interviewed later returned to the city, and the four did not return to the city. None of the seven educated young people who married locally could return to the city on a large scale in 1978, and they had different attitudes towards returning to the city.

Zhang Xuezheng and his wife did not want to return to the city. On the one hand, they did a very good job in Tumen Railway Bureau. Zhang Xuezheng was promoted repeatedly in the Railway Bureau, and was elected to the Great Hall of the People three times. The couple had a stable salary in the Railway Bureau and had no pressure on their material life. On the other hand, she and her husband are both the backbone of the local symphony orchestra and are very satisfied with their spiritual life. Zhang Xuezheng returned to the city in 2000 because of the complete restructuring of the country and the removal of the entire Railway Bureau. She reports, "When I first returned to Shanghai, although with the help of my parents-in-law, housing was not a problem, but I was unable to find a job, and my family had no financial resources." She also lived in the

park by renting and selling Korean costumes brought back from Yanbian to pedestrians.

Later, because she had the experience of hosting a wedding in Yanbian, she turned to be a wedding host, which really stabilized her. Some educated young people like Zhang Xuezheng are reluctant to return to the city because of their marriage and family, stable jobs. This is also a continuation of the influence of Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement.

Li Guibao and Qin Guofeng were very eager to return to the city. In 1989, in order to help the former Shanghai sent-down youth who are still working in the countryside, the government allowed one unmarried and unemployed child of each sent-down youth family to come back to Shanghai. However, the condition is that the children of sent-down youth should have their parents, brothers and sisters in Shanghai as "guardians" and solve the housing problem at the same time. Qin Guofeng moved his son's Hukou back to Shanghai when the policy allowed her children to move back to the city. Hukou is a special system in China. When every Chinese were born, their parents needed to sign in child's name and born place in the local institution. For example, my Hukou is in Hubei province because I was born there and my parents' Hukou are in Hubei. My Hukou should stay with my parents' Hukou. Hukou system is quite unfair in current society. For example, people whose parents were born in Shanghai, children's Hukou is also in Shanghai, which means the children has a lot of rights when she was born,

like buying house, insurance in Shanghai, going to school in Shanghai. Considering the educational unfairness in China, children who are born in Shanghai has more chance to go to top universities in China. People without Shanghai Hukou needed to work double hard to get the similar life with those people who were born there. That's why those sent-down youth eager to move their children and their own Hukou back to Shanghai. At the beginning of the policy, a family allowed only one person to return to the city. At that time, Li Guibao took the education of his eldest daughter into consideration and sent her back to Shanghai first, with his brother as "guardian". Later, after Li Guibao retired, the family returned to Shanghai together, but at first, the conditions for the placement of sent-down youth were not enough. No house, a family of four crowded in a house with only a dozen square meters. Later, in Minhang, Shanghai, a house for sent-down youth was set up. Although there were various obstacles to returning to the city, Li Guibao insisted on returning to the city. Although both Li Guibao and Zhang Xuezhen have returned to the city now, their returns to the city are different. The specific manifestation is that Li Guibao, who married a peasant, is more difficult than Zhang Xuezhen in returning to the city. This is also the most direct influence of the different marriage choices of sent-down youth on the return of the city after marriage. Zhang Xuezhen's husband is a male sent-down youth in Shanghai. His mother-in-law's family has better economic conditions. After the withdrawal of Tumen Railway Bureau, Zhang Xuezhen and her husband returned to Shanghai. Her mother-in-law directly

helped them solve the housing problems after their return to the city. Li Guibao's housing situation was very difficult at first, but she improved the condition later.

Four sent-down youth who failed to return to the city, first of all, married all the local farmers. Why did Li Guibao marry the farmers but return to the city? This problem is mainly related to the conditions of the native family and the willingness of the sent-down youth to return to the city. First of all, when the national policy initially allowed the children of sent-down youth to return to the city, the family in Shanghai was required to receive them as guardians. Taking Cheng Yufang as an example, the relationship between Cheng Yufang and her family in Shanghai was very bad. Brothers and sisters also went to different places together. In Shanghai, only the stepmother and father who are not well connected have no condition to return to the city, and they have no strong will to return to the city. But Li Guibao is different. Li Guibao's brothers' families in Shanghai can accept their daughters. Li Guibao himself hopes to return to the city for his children's education. This should be the most important reason for the return of the educated women who are married to the peasants. Later, the policy allowed the sent-down youth to return to the city after retirement, which was directly related to the economic conditions of the original families of the sent-down youth, the most direct is the housing problem. If economic conditions are not allowed, returning to the city is not possible.



I also asked the interviewees about the issue of childbearing and birth control after marriage. One-child policy was formally written into the Constitution in 1978. What impact did it have on sent-down youth's childbearing after marriage? Which methods of contraception were adopted?

Zhang Xuezheng gave birth to her daughter in 1978, but when her daughter was only six months old, she returned to Shanghai and brought her to her grandparents. Because at that time, the state began to carry out family planning work, Zhang Xuezheng was assigned to do this work because she had a strong ability in the unit and was also a woman. But the job itself is more offensive. Many locals have no idea of birth control or abortion and are born when they are pregnant. What is more difficult is that many first-born girls would want another boy and force them to do family planning work so that they don't have children. It's like letting people lose their children and grandchildren. Zhang Xuezheng really offended some people. At that time, the windows of the house were smashed, Zhang Xuezheng and his wife were afraid that their daughter would be in danger, so they sent them back to their grandparents in Shanghai.

Cheng Yufang became pregnant soon after her marriage. She had her first child in October 1974 and her second in November 1976. She wanted only one child at that

time, and the husband thought that there were two too many. After the implementation of family planning, Cheng Yufang relied on wearing rings and taking medicines for contraception, but she did not wear them and had a miscarriage. When you are pregnant, go to a local hospital once a month for free. When the production was delivered, the midwife was born in her own family because she had no money to go to the hospital to have children.

Generally speaking, the family planning policy at that time had a considerable impact on the married life of female sent-down youth who did not return to the city at that time. At least sent-down youth have a strong sense of contraception, but because of the immaturity of contraceptive methods, there have been abortions.

In terms of economic life, for example, the economic pressures faced by Li Guibao, Pan Longde, Liu Xiudi, Tang Haifang and Cheng Yufang who married peasants were significantly greater than those of Qin Guofeng who married local girls and Zhang Xuezhen who married male intellectuals after recruiting workers into the city. Li Guibao, who also married a peasant but returned to the city, has better economic conditions than Liu Xiudi, Pan Longde, Tang Haifang and Cheng Yufang, who did not return to the city later. Economic conditions are directly related to returning to the city and recruiting workers, mainly because they can have a stable wage, although not high,

but prices were relatively low at that time. People who take stable wages and take centimeters are still much better in terms of economic conditions. The economic problems faced by the educated women who marry the peasants are very similar.

Li Guibao's life was very hard when he first married, and the man's family was in a state of untold trouble. Koreans have a tradition of looking at the economic situation of a family, just looking at the number of pots and bowls in the family cabinet, while Li Guibao's husband's cabinet has only a few broken bowls. At that time, the living conditions of the mother-in-law's family were very poor. The ground of the family was uneven, the windows were broken, the rice VATS were empty, and there were even a lot of foreign debts. Lying on the broken earth kang, Li Guibao's most real idea on his wedding night is: how to live in the future. In order to earn a little more centimeters for the family, she paid off the grain owed to the production team as soon as possible, went up to the mountains with her husband and uncle when she was pregnant and took part in labor. When she stayed at home, she found her own tools to shovel the uneven floor of the family. In just one year, under Li Guibao's internal and external management, the family not only paid off all its foreign debts, but also left enough food for the whole family to eat for half a year. The whole family has changed, the floor is flat, the windows are no longer broken, there are also decent pots and bowls in the cabinet.

Liu Xiudi is still living in a very difficult situation in Hunchun County, Yanbian. Although Liu Xiudi and her husband are more capable, Liu Xiudi herself suffered from severe illness and aplastic anemia in the past few years, which cannot be reimbursed and consumed at least 300,000 yuan at home. At that time, with foreign debt, relying on two sons and daughters, as well as sister in Shanghai to help just barely survive the crisis. After her marriage, she had two sons and a daughter. The girl married a local farmer in Hunchun. Both her eldest son and her second son worked in the local forestry bureau. The salaries of the two sons are also relatively low, averaging more than 2,000 yuan a month, Liu Xiudi's own retirement salary of more than 2,000 yuan, and his wife's retirement salary of more than 1,000 yuan. Her evaluation of married life is that although the financial pressure is great, but the spirit is more comfortable, the son is very sensible filial piety, but also mentioned a detail, that is, granddaughter is also filial piety, Liu Xiudi was ill at that time, the son's family is planning to buy a house, granddaughter is only a teenager, very sensible to tell her mother not to buy a house. Because Grandma was still sick and might spend money, the material life at that time was very difficult, but it was hopeful that she could survive any harder. Before Liu Xiudi got sick, he spent seven thousand yuan a month. He could imagine the financial pressure of the whole family.

Pan Longdi lived with his old man and his elder brother after marriage, and lived in a

cottage in the countryside with his wife. The Korean hut is a big Kang outside. There are two small huts left and right. Pan Longdai and her husband live in the North hut, while their parents-in-law live in the South hut. The place is small enough for two people to sleep. The economy is relatively general, not difficult and not particularly good. To some extent, Pan Longdi's husband's family condition is better than Li Guibao's, or at least no foreign debt. In terms of spiritual life, Pan Longde was hesitant when she answered, referring to the difference between before and after marriage, euphemistically speaking that Korean men are more male chauvinism, not particularly family-oriented, perhaps the family thing is that they worry more about themselves, coupled with the position of rural teachers at that time, so in fact, work and family. The pressure is relatively large, you can imagine that the husband at that time may not be particularly thoughtful. On the other hand, the lover is a village cadre, and the production team has a lot of work, big and small. They are busy outside everywhere and take their children with them mainly by themselves. Her attitude toward her marriage was not regretted that she could not return to the city after marriage. She was basically satisfied with her life after marriage. Her attitude towards life was that everything was not absolutely perfect. Before marriage, she had gradually adapted to the life in the countryside. She felt that people could live their own lives, and her mentality was not harmonious. Nothing can be done.

Generally speaking, Qin Guofeng and Zhang Xuezhen were more satisfied with their spouses and their married life than the five-female sent-down youth married to peasants. The gap between urban and rural areas has been extended, which is contrary to the original intention of "Up to the Mountains and Down to the countryside Movement", and as for sent-down youth individuals, marriage is often the best manifestation of this gap.

## Chapter 5

I use oral history as the main method of my research. In this chapter, I will introduce some oral history theories which have inspired my interview and interpretation and conclude with some methodological considerations.

As for my topic of this paper, I used sent-down youths' interviews to find the answer to the questions that whether sent-down youths' marriage choices are influenced by the government policy and what their life was like. I used oral history as a method to uncover the truth of a history that has not been fully understood. Unlike other historians who have written about sent-down youths, I did not use my interviews as a supplement of other written historical materials. I do use statistics as supplement of my oral interviews. Research about the Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement use written materials mostly because historians suspected that whether dozens of people's personal history could represent the period, in other words, it is hard to draw a conclusion through only interviews. I was challenged by professors when 80% materials of my bachelor graduation paper were from oral interviews. They asked me, "How can you draw a conclusion by only interviewing these people? I know some other stories that are totally different from your stories. You can never interview all people who has been through the movement. So, what is the meaning of your paper?" I started

to think about that other than being the supplementary of statistics and written materials, what oral history's meaning and core irreplaceability is. How could oral history be acknowledged as an independent disciplinary rather than as a research method or the branch of a discipline? What are the theoretical frameworks of oral history? What's more, what are the limitations of oral history and what is the difference between oral history and those disciplines which are often mentioned with oral history, such as media, social science and history? During the last year of study, I could see that senior scholars devoted a lot to building oral history's disciplinary characteristics. I think the most attractive of these is that oral history uses normal people's voice. Maybe dozens of people's voice could not represent the whole picture of one event, but the truth is that people have their own specific feelings, reaction and memory of one big event and could never be represented by one or several voices. But they also couldn't be represented by statistics and numbers. Official records leave a blank because it lost the voice of ordinary people, oral history filled in the blanks by stories, memories of ordinary people. That is the core irreplaceability.

Chinese Great Cultural Revolution is a popular research topic inside and outside China and oral interview is also a frequently used method when conducting research about Modern Chinese History. Many historians use interview as supplement for their research of writing materials and because of that, there are many interviews and



interpretation conducted by others. Even so, conducting interviews by myself is necessary not only because my interests could be different from those interviews already down by others, but also because oral history is created by the narration of the interviewee and the interpretation of the interviewer. As Portelli said in *Oral history as Genre*, “oral history is a dialogic discourse, created not only by what the interviewees say, but also by what we as historians do-by the historian's presence in the field, and by the historian's presentation of the material.” (Portelli). From my perspective, “A thousand readers made a thousand Hamlets”. “Historian’s presentation of the material” is how historians understand and interpret the interview. Historians may have different understanding of one same sentence from the interviewee. And I can’t see the original answer and context of the interviewee, so if I use others’ interviews, there will be risks of misunderstanding of the interviewee.

When it comes to specific interview methods, I want to talk about specific techniques I used in my paper and several oral historians whose theories influenced my interview.

The biggest problem I encountered during my interview is that some interviewees were unwilling to talk with me because they were suspicious of my motivation. This is about the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. They kept asking me, why are you interested in this? What could you do if you know my story, nothing could

change it. I was disappointed at first but I could totally understand their reactions. Those interviewees were introduced by a reporter who interviewed them before and the reporter was also a sent-down youth. In order to interview the sent-down youths, the reporter went to their home in the mountain in the most northern part of China. They have similar experiences and feel closer to each other. But I am just a young woman who called them and said I am interested in their stories for some reasons. They don't know me or trust me. So, face to face interview is better than call or online interview is because that the interviewee and interviewer could feel more connected. If I want the interviewee to communicate with me, trust me or open their heart to me, I need to build the relationship before and during the interview. The most important thing may not be knowing the interviewee first, but let the interviewee know you first. Try to tell them in advance that who I am, why I am interested in your story, I won't share your story with others without your permission to help them feel safe. Sent-down youths who are still in the countryside are sensitive, because many of their parents were criticized by the government and red guards. That was a period that if anyone say anything bad about the leaders of the government, they will be arrested and criticized. Even if I knew that, it is still too difficult to build the trust through phone call or email. Face to face interview is especially important when we conduct interview about the sensitive event.

When I talk about the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, I draw

upon Luisa Passerini's theory of intersubjectivity. Passerini wrote in *Memory and Utopia* that the third set of meanings of subjectivity has to do with historians' own subjectivity, a form of intersubjectivity. In this approach, intersubjectivity refers essentially to relationships between different generations of historians and the interpersonal nature of knowledge, as well as to the specific quality of the relationship between teacher and student (Passerini 1991c). Knowledge that the interviewer and interviewee share with each other is quite important to the interview. The first time I interviewed sent-down youths, I had little knowledge of Down to the Countryside Movement and could not understand the special characteristics of the period that they lived through. I noticed that when they decided that I kept asking some stupid questions, they lost interest in talking with me. Another problem is how to make a balance between showing off what I know and remind the interviewee appropriately of my knowledge. Once I interviewed Li Guibao, the first several questions included "When did you go to the countryside". After she answered that she went in 1968, I said, "Oh, you are *three graduating classes*", which means junior and senior high school graduates of 1966~1968. This group of people were the first batch of students who were sent down to the countryside, so they have their special title. She was surprised when I said "three graduating classes" because to some degree, she has a sense of personal identification about the word "three graduating classes". I could feel that the relationship between me and Li was closer and she was more willing to tell me her experience once we developed

a relationship. During discussions among students, some people argued that if we didn't prepare too much before an interview but just ask several well-spaced questions, we will be surprised to find out how rich information the interviewer would share. However, from my perspective, it depends. I research basic knowledge about the events, but I am often critical about comments from other researchers, or interviews conducted by others. I did more preparation before the interview by conducting a pre-interview to build the relationship and tell the interviewee what kind of research subjects are important to me. For example, I ask my interviewees to talk about dialogues, actions or details about one story that they may remember. I did that before I interviewed Li. When she described her wedding ceremony to me, she remembered what I said and gave me a lot of details, like what kind of dishes they prepared, who came to her wedding and what they said, which was useful to my study.

Intersubjectivity could also mean that questions interviewers ask has something to do with their own mentality and could reflect their own experience. I reflected on myself and asked why I am interested in sent-down youths. Though there was a forty-year gap between me and them, they were once middle and high school students just as I was - eager to go to college and get better education. I made it but they were deprived of the same rights, and as I wrote in the beginning of this thesis that was my motivation. Intersubjectivity also refers to the interaction between interviewer and interviewee in

an interview. Interviewer and interviewee are two different subjects with different subjectivities and goals. The interactions and contradictions between subjects are interesting because the interview is a process of two different subjects forming new ideas in conversation. My understanding of sent-down youths became deeper as a result of the interviews. The interaction became richer for the interviewees once they realized that someone who was born after 1990 could be interested in what happened nearly fifty years before.

Alessandro Portelli said, “the interviewer defines the role and establishes the basis of narrative authority.” (Portelli) He insists that the interviewer is the person who starts the conversation and to some extent leads the direction of the conversation. “The narrator feels entitled to speak only because of a mandate from the interviewer: I only speak because you ask me to (and, often, I will say what you want to hear).” (Portelli) In that way, the interviewer authorizes the interviewee to speak, which is good because the interviewer should take responsibility to lead the conversation to a meaningful direction. It is effective for an interviewer to seize power in the interview. Seizing the power of the interview sometimes means interrupting when the interviewee keeps talking about something irrelevant. For example, when I interviewed Zhang Xuezheng, she was obsessed with talking about her recent life with her husband rather than her life with her husband in the countryside. I had to shift the conversation back to that period

again and again. But when she talked about her life when she first came back to cities, I didn't interrupt her because she said, "At first, I couldn't find a job to support my family. I made money by charging people who wanted to try my ethnic Korean folk costume in the park. Those beautiful folk costume were gifts from my ethnic Korean mother, who held me when I was a sent-down youth." I didn't ask questions about her life after she back to cities, but what she said surprised me. I started to think about whether finding a job was a common problem for sent-down youths after they first went back to cities. Some follow-up questions about her life with her ethnic Korean host was formed in my head. Interviewees didn't always follow my interview guide, the line between interruption or not is not clear. From my perspective, it depends on whether I am interested in the topic she brought out. In this case, her current life with her husband is similar to other people in Shanghai, but her life in the countryside, or her life when she first came back to cities has a lot to do with Down to the Countryside Movement which I am interested. That's how I decided to interrupt or not interrupt. The last point of methodology I want to talk about is follow-up questions. Portelli said, "an interview can shift from a one-way questionnaire to thick dialogue, according to how much space questions allow for the answers, and to the way in which the answers act upon the questions." (Portelli) I came to understand this sentence more and more after I did more and more interviews. As an interviewer, I can't anticipate everything and figure out every question before an interview. During the interview, I was surprised by how a

question I asked turned a story. “The form of the interview depends on the extent to which the interviewer belongs to the reality under investigation: narrators will assume that a ‘native’ historian already knows the facts, and will furnish explanations, theories, and judgments instead.” (Portelli) During my interview with Li, she talked about Gongfen, I know what Gongfen is but I realize that the audience, especially the foreign audience, has no idea about Gongfen. So, I asked her to explain a little bit about Gongfen and talk about more details about her and her husband’s Gongfen. Sometimes, interviewees assume that interviewers and audience have the same knowledge system with them, but the truth is their subjectivity may be far different from each other. That’s why the interviewer should take the responsibility of asking follow-up questions to help the interviewee to illustrate clearly.

The most amazing thing I learned from using oral history as the main method to research the sent-down youth is that, how powerful ordinary people’s stories are. Although the fate of them were changed by the decision of the government and they had a same name “sent-down youth”, but when they face the same policy, they act differently, fought, gave up or regret, which led to their different fate and experience, which is the real whole picture of history. They were not a number in the history book anymore. Sent-down youth were 65-70 years old now and the special period has passed 50 years. Without oral history, those beautiful or tough stories about them would be

buried forever. Younger generation will only learn about how many sent-down youths were in the countryside or in which year they were allowed to come back to city home, or several descriptive sentences about sent-down youths' life in the countryside, like what I learned from my middle school history book. Younger generation won't be moved or remember the history by learning those number. What happened before could give people power to go on. As Passerini reminds us, oral history points both to the past and the future. When younger generation read my paper, I hope they could be moved or could be printed with some feelings, maybe come to realize that our generation is kind of lucky because we hold fates in our own hand and we could achieve our life goal by working hard, no need to worry about our family ground or class region; maybe feel sorry for the sent down youth. Stories about one big event are always powerful than number. We should keep that in mind that the cultural revolution couldn't be replayed, cherish and keep moving.



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